

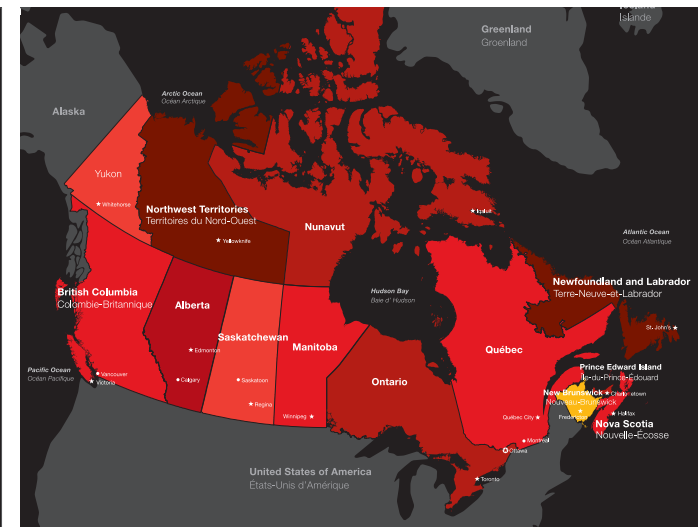
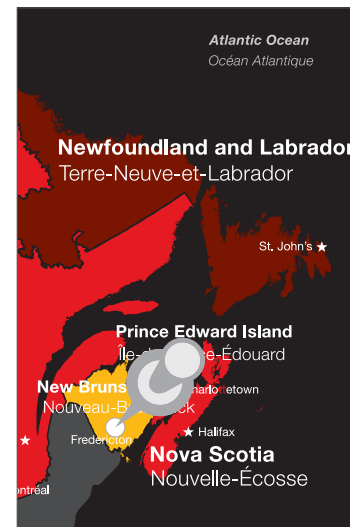
Signature Experiences Collection® Case Study Series

Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival

Fredericton, New Brunswick

<http://www.harvestjazzandblues.com/>

April 2013



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<http://www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca/Products/H/DeepBluesExperience-HarvestJazzandBluesFestival.aspx>

April 2013

Deep Blues Experience

Leading by Example

Discover how an intriguing idea, perfectly aligned with your ideal guest, becomes a Signature Experience and best seller that delights hard-core blues fans. The Deep Blues experience is a central storytelling feature of the festival; part of the overall event mix that generates an additional revenue stream.

Join David Seabrook, festival volunteer for 22 years and founder of the event, as he shares insights on the festival, experiential travel and their Canadian Signature Experience.

Tell Us About Your Company

“We are big in scope and talent, but small in terms of intimacy.”

Founded in 1991, the Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival began with the goal to reinvigorate live music in the community. Steeped in the history of these two genres of music in Fredericton, the festival began with Maritime talent. Twenty-two years later, the festival retains its Atlantic musical roots and has opened its arms to include established and emerging musicians from around the world. Combining artistic talent with Maritime hospitality and community atmosphere, this annual six-day festival in September sells out every year. In fact, setting aside tickets for visitors is essential to ensuring travelers from away can secure a ticket!

Tourism New Brunswick’s interview with David Seabrook provides a personal, musical insight.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7fWSogF_FI



What does “Experiential Travel” mean to your business?

For us, it's all about creating an immersive, emotional experience. We began with one stage and one free event. We have now grown to 23 stages and over 150 events with 400 musicians. Yet despite our success, as we grew it was important that we retained the small community feel, the intimacy of being close up and connecting with people. We take advantage of our city heritage by placing many of the main venues in the middle of national historic sites, which adds richness to the festival environment. It's not a festival that could take place anywhere else.

Throughout the festival, we like to sprinkle in the element of surprise. Festivals are different than general tourism products or tickets to a show; they fundamentally create their own energy and the more immersive you can make it for everyone, the better it is and the quicker you can grow a strong fan base.

We create a relationship between the audience and the musicians that's special. It's friendly. It's full of energy. It's intimate. That's what music fans want. It goes beyond a transactional relationship. It's full on immersion.

What makes a “Memorable Travel Experience”?

At the Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival it is about making people feel special, and helping them connect with the music, musicians, volunteers and the people in our community.



© The Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival

Are you seeing any increase in demand for experiential travel?

Yes, people want more than a transaction and a ticket, more than access to a show. They want to be part of the festival experience, to feel that their presence changes the show. This is what separates great, well-curated festivals that are generating a fan base and visitation. We've seen our customer migrate to us from other events and many tell us it's because of the experience, the opportunity to be part of something.

What's important to your company?

Attention to detail, quality, and a small-town feel with big-town talent are important to us. We also build in little surprises such as watching some headliner sets behind the curtain, meet the artist signings over dinner in a local pub, or skipping lines ups to the main Harvest Jazz and Blues event; you don't know what they are until they happen!

We're a big festival in small, lesser known, part of North America. It takes a lot to get on the radar. We've built our reputation on delivering an intimate, fun, community-based experience for both the visitors and the artists. By treating people right we are able to attract and connect incredible artists to an enthusiastic, appreciative audience. We'll go the extra mile for artists. Take them off the road and take them home for dinner with a family. Take them fishing. Take them biking. We make their experience special.

What results from this philosophy, is that world-class artists are willing to go the extra mile for us. They'll stay around and jump on stage to play with a developing Maritime artist. Or they'll tell more intimate stories from the stage. Or maybe they'll jump off the stage into the audience. Or join the audience after the gig. We create a no-risk environment by capitalizing on our scale and the fact we're not on the big-city, high-security festival circuit.

Describe your ideal guests.

The website says it all, "Our audiences are a fleece-wearing, beer drinking, music loving kind of crowd whose enthusiasm blows our artists away and brings out the best performance in them. Harvest Week means a week of letting loose, taking in tunes, and having one hell of a time!"

Tell us about your key partners.

The community volunteers are the backbone of the festival. Beyond the manpower contributed, they connect guests to the heart and soul of the community and are vital to that 'local' and 'intimate' environment that people enjoy. The festival also couldn't occur without the support from our corporate partners and government funding partners. We want to keep the event affordable and together with the support of local business and the community, it is possible. We're engaged with local bars and restaurants and the downtown business association. It's truly a community effort. "It takes a village...to pull off a world class festival in a small community."

What are you main sales channels?

Tickets to the festival can be purchased online through our website and we work with a number of tour operators such as Globus-Cosmos, Windows on the Wild, Audley Travel, Frontier Travel, and Main Tour Connection.

The majority of our guests are from Canada, the USA, further afield, the United Kingdom.



Tell us about your marketing.

Creating the story and engaging people are both critical to marketing the festival. Social media is a vital component to what we do to drive ticket and merchandise sales, but also grow Blues and Jazz audiences.

As an organization we support FAM tours, media trade shows, the travel trade, in-market promotions and global marketing campaigns. Photos and video shoots are excellent to bring the story alive and connect guests with the artists before, during and after the show.

We have a very strong media relations program and a big part of our marketing is through social media.

Your Canadian Signature Experience

It's a music lover's fantasy: gain exclusive access to one of Canada's most renowned blues festivals. With the personal assistance of a festival guide, create your own customized Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival experience, giving you an insider's take on the festival's hottest acts, with backstage access and a private artists' gathering.

Be one of the privileged few to gain entrée to the festival through the Deep Blues Experience Package. Choose from three nights of mind-blowing music in several venues, and experience some of the finest jazz and blues of your life. Along the way, be singled out for intimate backstage moments, getting a firsthand look behind the scenes of your favorite concerts. Have an intimate, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to join major festival artists in a private dinner. With the help of your specially appointed festival guide, find out about the best local activities and Maritime restaurants, and experience the finest of Maritime hospitality. Throughout the festival your emotions and passion will go wild as you listen to emerging and established jazz and blues musicians.



Who does your Signature Experience appeal to?

They tend to be hard-core blues fans who want go deeper, or people who have been to the festival a few times and want to get the inside track. They're looking for a once in a lifetime experience they can't get in a bigger city or a mega festival.

When Tourism New Brunswick identified the EQ match, it was with the Authentic Experiencer, Cultural Explorer, Free Spirit and No-Hassle Traveller. If we had to single it down to one type it would be the Cultural Explorer.

How does your Signature Experience contribute to Canada's competitive landscape?

It's the only custom guided blues music experience in Canada that is rooted in local history, people, and Maritime hospitality. The backstage moments and opportunities to dine with festival artists combine with the VIP access to venues that create the 'just for you' experience; what you want, when you want, where you want it at the festival.

How do you sell your Signature Experience?

The Deep Blues experience sells for \$300/ticket (2013 pricing); tickets go on sale, on-line in May. The program generates phenomenal interest with our most passionate fans as well as the media; we don't have to worry about sales.

What the Deep Blues experience does bring to us is terrific promotional value. For example, we have used contests in previous years that promote "We're not just giving away tickets to the Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival in Fredericton ... we're giving away an experience!" To win contestants have to write a bluesy song, themed to the festival, call in and sing their entry! We also receive favorable media coverage that helps sell the festival.

"We use our Deep Blues Signature Experience as a narrative to tell the value proposition of the intimacy that our festival offers and what differentiates us from others. The layers in the experience that this small group of guests engages in are all elements of the bigger festival and things we want the media to report on."

David Seabrook,
Festival Communications Director

Tell us something we don't know.

We didn't apply for the Signature Experience Collection right away, as we were under the impression that festivals wouldn't qualify. We had created the Deep Blues Experience to become part of the New Brunswick experiences collection. The province encouraged us to apply, and when we were accepted, I was surprised.

The Deep Blues Experience works in powerful ways that won't be captured in traditional metrics.

A great experience can bring different benefits to different stakeholders. For the guests, the Deep Blue experience offers a mind-blowing opportunity to get up close and connect with the artists. For the festival, the Deep Blues experience is the anchor of our narrative and storytelling about the festival. For Tourism New Brunswick it is unique contribution to their Experience Collection and for the CTC it is an opportunity to draw international attention and interest to a world-class event wrapped up in the warmth and hospitality that the Maritimes are famous for.

"What makes us unique is the intimacy of the experience. In fact, we started a social media program called My Harvest to get the audience to tell the story of their experience. This is a community festival, with a very strong tourism component."

David Seabrook,
Festival Communications Director





Insights for Others

Have you made any changes to respond to the demand for experiential travel?

Not really, immersion is the driving ingredient that is important to us so as the festival grows, we remain conscious of this element, as it is foundational to the visitor experience for locals, musicians and visitors from away.

We are looking at how we could modify the Deep Blues Experience to create a different, less labour intensive, yet high value experience based on immersive qualities, and one that drives a new revenue stream.

Any marketing challenges?

Ironically because the festival sells out and the locals love it, as we get more internationally known, more visitors will want to come and we have to plan for that.

Any benefits of being in the Signature Experiences Collection?

The best part of being in the Collection is the validation it provides. Here's an example. In 2012, while in Britain, we had a contest going with the province to find the best British blues band and fly them to Fredericton to participate in the festival. The Canadian Tourism Commission was simultaneously hosting a SEC-related event and we were invited. A radio reporter was there and when she learned the festival was a Canadian Signature Experience, this opened the door to new business and promotional opportunities.

Any tips for others?

- Don't develop a Signature Experience because you could get into the collection, do it because it makes sense to your business and will add a new dimension, whatever that is.
- Deliver a real expression of your community and your destination.
- Deliver value beyond the expectations of the customer.

Any final words of wisdom?

We would advise that music festivals build product from the inside out. Start with your community and its assets then focus on the artists that who deliver the product. Immerse your customer in the experience. That's the core product. Great music festivals have a strong sense of identity beyond what or who is contracted on the stage. Then ensure your product aligns with customer demand and a high degree of customer focus and quality delivery.

Story contributed by: David Seabrook, Festival Communications Director

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